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CITY HALL (WOMAN'S MAGAZINE BUILDING)  
6801 DELMAR  
UNIVERSITY CITY  
SAINT LOUIS COUNTY  
MISSOURI

HABS No. MO-249

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

CITY HALL PROJECT

HABS No. MO-249

NAME

Executive Building  
American Women's League  
Woman's Magazine

City Hall  
University City, Missouri  
Since 1930

LOCATION

6801 Delmar  
The northeast corner of Delmar and Trinity Avenue  
Bounded on the east side by Harvard Avenue  
City of University City  
County of Saint Louis  
State of Missouri

PRESENT OWNER

City of University City

PRESENT OCCUPANT

City of University City

PRESENT USE

Municipal Government offices and services

SIGNIFICANCE

The City Hall of University City, a five-story octagonal structure, was built in 1903 to serve as the executive building for the corporations of Edward Cardner Lewis, the founder of the city. University City acquired the building in a trade for the old City Hall on May 15, 1930. It was appraised at \$855,000 and was dedicated as the official headquarters of the City on November 1, 1930.

The building was designed by Herbert C. Chivers, who described its design as "the only strictly monumental office building in the world." Subsequently, the name of the architect has been chiseled from the cornerstone.

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Architecturally a blend of styles, the structure basically is of an eclectic style that can be termed "Exposition" or "World's Fair - Beaux Arts," introduced initially for the Columbian Exposition in Chicago (1893) and perfected in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis (1904). The structure reflects many of the design features of the Festival Hall, architect Cass Gilbert's "Wedding Cake" at the St. Louis Fair. Proponents of contemporary architecture claim that these two Expositions retarded the course of modern architecture by fifty years.

Before recent removal of some ornamental features, the roof-line showed a strong resemblance to the French Renaissance period.

The five-story octagonal tower, 135 feet high and 85 feet in diameter, rests on a first-story of rusticated stonework. The two entrances (only one presently in active use) are approached by wide stone stairways, flanked by statues of lions carved in limestone by William Bailey. The doorways are featured with classically proportional Doric columns recessed into the rusticated limestone base encompassing the first floor of the structure. These two entrances are accented with a triangular pediment containing a carved cartouche with crossed palm leaves.

Windows on all eight sides are given a vertical treatment above the first floor. They are in an ornamental terra cotta frame and are divided horizontally at the various floor levels with terra cotta spandrels.

The top of the structure is capped with an elaborate terra cotta cornice forming the parapet and into which once was formed the eight groupings of cherubs, which were removed about 1945. After the City acquired the structure some stained glass windows were removed from the old City Hall Building and installed on the second floor of this structure.

The domed sheet metal covered roof terminates in a cylindrical cap which serves as a curb to conceal a gigantic searchlight. The ornamental metal ribs and the covering of the searchlight curb were removed in recent years.

The remainder of the exterior surfacing is a bull brick rusticated to match the stone base.

Although architectural styles have changed since 1903 when the structure was built, it has matured well and undoubtedly will outlive many of the structures being erected today. Because its design is so unusual and its usefulness as efficient and effective as the day it was built, it has been recognized nationally by being listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.<sup>2</sup>

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection

The Woman's Magazine building was built during 1903. Edward Gardner Lewis purchased an 85 acre plot of land in October of 1902.<sup>3</sup> The cornerstone was laid on August 20, 1903. The ceremony included the Chamberlain to the Czar of Russia, important local dignitaries and the governor of Missouri, David Francis, who was the featured speaker.<sup>4</sup> The press rooms were completed by January 1, 1904 and the office building was finished soon after - in time for the 1904 Worlds Fair.<sup>5</sup>

University City was incorporated as a fourth class city on September 4, 1906. Lewis became the first mayor. The first meeting of the Board of Alderman took place in his office in the Woman's Magazine building.<sup>6</sup> The city government operated from this building until April 11, 1911 when a new city hall was opened at 6618 Delmar.<sup>7</sup>

2. Architect

Little is known about the architect, Herbert C. Chivers. He did have a business at 100 North 7th Street and published a catalogue<sup>8</sup> of homes which he had designed and would have built for interested St. Louisans. The following is a cut line under his picture in a 1905 periodical:

Herbert C. Chivers who has designed monumental structures in every important city of the United States, a local example of which is the Woman's Magazine building. Mr. Chivers, like most men of national eminence, is best known outside of his own city. He is distinguished as an architect of exceptional originality, and for the fact that he cannot be handled to his clients detriment. When asked the secret of his success he answered, "General preparedness".<sup>9</sup>

3. Builder, contractor, suppliers

The buildings were designed by Architect Herbert Chivers. Black Brothers were the general contractors. The bronze stairrails of the central stairs were done by Winslow of Chicago. The two buildings, the octagonal office building and the great press rooms in its rear, cost complete approximately \$700,000 which would be equivalent to a million dollars today. The mural decorations were done by Ralph Olt, while the ornamental plaster work was done by James White, then a well known citizen of St. Louis.<sup>10</sup>

4. Original plans and construction

There are no known plans or blueprints of the building. There are pictures of different stages of construction and early views in the archives of University City Library. The following is a description of the building in 1930 just before the city dedicated it:

No one can say exactly to what category of architectural design the City Hall of University City properly belongs. It is a combination of several, and because of that and its massiveness it is one of the most unique buildings in the country.

Majestically it towers over University City and west St. Louis as the central point of the western skyline. Its eight walls, wherein one time was contained the offices of the world's largest daily woman's daily newspaper, extend five stories upward, and its perpendicular lines curve gracefully over into Byzantine arches at the top.

Sixteen cherubs cast from the same mold top the cornices. Back of them a large round copper dome, now green with age roof the building.

Two main entrance ways, each guarded by lion structures, lead into the lobby and first floor of the building. A grand staircase of Italian marble extends like a fan from the Mosaic tile floor to a landing about halfway to the floor above. On the right and left of the landing two stairs curve away, winding symmetrically upward around the circle to meet again on the floor above and directly in front of the Mayor's office.

From the center of the ceiling of the second floor hangs a chandelier designed after the balcony around the main lobby. Sixteen lights set in candlestick holders illuminate the lobby, while eight Grecian columns and ornate top pieces enhance the appearance of the whole.

The council chamber on the fifth floor gives an impression of dignity with its rostrum and Mayor's desk, and in the background two large velvet draperies extending from the ceiling down. To either side forming a V are the desks of the Alderman, three on each side. Beyond is a rail dividing the room into official and public parts.

A small spiral stairway leads to the space in the dome hiding the huge spotlight. Resting on an elevator which lifts it from its den out onto the roof, this beacon stands eight feet high. When it is lit its powerful rays sweep the country for two hundred miles. This searchlight was placed there during the St. Louis World's Fair of 1903 (1904) and for years has been hidden away from public view. It will once more cast its far reaching beam the night of the dedication of the City Hall, November 1.<sup>11</sup>

## 5. Alterations and additions

The alterations for the most part have been gradual and difficult to document. The major change on the exterior was the removal of the cherubs from the cornices. They were in place at the dedication of the building as City Hall in 1930. They were removed because of deterioration. It was feared that they might fall and damage the building. During the 1960's the ribs which overlapped the copper roofing sheets were removed, and the roof was covered with green fiberglass. Funds are being set aside each year until there is enough to replace the roof and ribs with new copper.

Major changes took place in 1930 when the city became owner of the building. A raised platform and desks were installed on the fifth floor for the Mayor and Alderman. Theater seats were installed for the public. The cage elevator was enclosed and alterations were also made to accomodate offices.<sup>12</sup> Office alterations have continued over the years on the first, third and fourth floors.

## B. Historical Context

The Woman's Magazine building was built in 1903 by Edward Gardner Lewis as the base for his many enterprises. Many of his endeavors centered around the Lewis Publishing Company. The publications included The Woman's Magazine, The Woman's Farm Journal, The Woman's National Daily and The St. Louis Star.

Lewis used all of his publications for mail order purchases and in 1904 founded the People's United States Bank which was the first bank doing business by mail. In 1904 Lewis erected a tent city for visitors to the World's Fair near his building. In 1910 he organized the first convention of the American Women's League which brought several thousand women from throughout the country in one of his women's suffrage efforts. By 1912 Lewis' finances had crumbled, and he had left for California.<sup>13</sup>

The building stood idle for several years and was then purchased by the Orcutt Company which stored home furnishings in it, the press building and the Egyptian temple across the street.<sup>14</sup> During the late 1920's the Magazine Building is shown as the offices for the ninth district of the Veteran's Bureau.<sup>15</sup> The City of University City has occupied the building since 1930.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. Description of the Exterior

The building is in the form of a five story, 135 foot high octagonal tower, 85 feet in diameter with a domed copper roof. The structure consists of exterior masonry bearing walls, structural steel interior columns and beams, and poured concrete floor slabs. The exterior material consists of light gray limestone, buff brick, and terracotta. The roof is covered with copper in a light green patina color.

### B. Description of the Interior

The center portion of the first floor is devoted to a central lobby with a grand staircase to the second floor gallery. The floor is mosaic tile with a base of Tennessee pink marble. The wainscote is white Italian marble. The woodwork is oak in a dark stained and varnished finish. There are eight free standing Ionic columns in the lobby finished in scagliola work. The central feature of the lobby is a stairway of white Italian marble with scagliola work on the soffitts and outside stringers. The railing is wrought iron capped with a massive mahogany handrail. The second floor gallery is treated in a similar fashion with eight free standing Corinthian columns forming the inner circle of the gallery. The ceilings on the first and second floor lobby are each divided into eight panels, each containing a mural. The murals were painted by Ralph Schesley Ott whose murals can be found in the Missouri State Capitol building and in the St. Louis City Hall. One of the rooms on the second floor was originally the office of E.G. Lewis, the founder of the City. This room is panelled in oak with decorative plaster ornamentation above the panelling. The ceiling contains a large mural, and art glass is utilized in the window.

The third and fourth floors are treated as conventional offices. The fifth floor, however, is a large open sapce with a domed plaster ceiling rising to a height of 35 feet, supported on stylelized Ionic columns.

### C. Site

The building is one of a group of distinctively designed buildings located in a civic plaza area. It is prominently situated on high ground on a major thoroughfare, Delmar Boulevard, and its distinctive domed shaped roof can be seen from a considerable distance. The site is well landscaped and provides an appropriate setting for the building. The main entrances face southwest and southeast, although the southeast entrance is no longer used.

## PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

### A. Architectural Drawings: None

## B. Early Views

Photographs, records and other items have been deposited in the archives of the University City Public Library. There is a great need for an archivist to catalogue and cross reference the materials which are there. Some of this data has been brought to the public through a pictorial history published this year in commemoration of University City's seventy-fifth anniversary.<sup>16</sup> A second commemorative volume in narrative form will be published before the end of the year.

## C. Bibliography

### 1. Primary Sources

The city council minutes dating back to the founding are available at the City Clerk's Office. The deed books would be at the St. Louis County Government Center, Recorder of Deeds, 7900 Forsyth, Clayton, Missouri. Other documents have been deposited in the archives of the University City Public Library.

### 2. Secondary Sources

Chivers, Herbert C. Artistic Homes. St. Louis: Herbert C. Chivers, 1905.

City of University City, Historic Preservation (University City, Missouri: City of University City, 1973).

"Dedication of the New Women's Magazine Building," The Woman's Magazine, October, 1903.

History of St. Louis County, Missouri. Clayton, Missouri: The Watchman Advocate, (1920).

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Lewis, E.G. "The History of the Women's Magazine Buildings, U. City," The University City News, 6 November, 1930.

Longs, Jim, Tom Franey, Charles Scott Payne, eds. A University City Album: Remembrance and Reflections of Seventy-Five Years. St. Louis: The Citizen's Committee for the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 1981.

Lumpp, James. University City: Its History and Dedication of New City Hall. St. Louis: Garrison-Wagner Printing Company, 1930.

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The Saint Louis Republic, 31 December, 1905.



Staff of U.S. Veterans' Bureau: District No. 9 (Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas), University City, Missouri: District No. 9 of the Veterans' Bureau, undated.

"Without Special Architectural Design, New City Hall is One of Most Unique Buildings In County," The University City Journal, October 31, 1930.

3. Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Kramer and Harms, Incorporated, Architects, City Hall University City, Missouri: A Plan For Its Rehabilitation, a report prepared at the request of the City Council (St. Louis: Kramer and Harms, Inc., 1976), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup>Sidney Morse, The Siege of University City: The Dreyfus Case of America, University City, Missouri: The University City Publishing Company, 1912, p. 228.

<sup>4</sup>"Dedication of the New Women's Magazine Building," The Woman's Magazine, October, 1903, p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>E.G. Lewis, "The History of the Woman's Magazine Buildings, U. City," The University City News, November 6, 1930, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>James Lump, University City: Its History and Dedication of New City Hall (This book was prepared for the dedication of the Magazine Building as City Hall), St. Louis: Garrison-Wagner Printing Company, 1930, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>8</sup>Herbert C. Chivers, Artistic Homes, St. Louis: Herbert C. Chivers, 1905.

<sup>9</sup>The St. Louis Republic, (Sunday Edition), December 31, 1905, The page number is no longer attached.

<sup>10</sup>E.G. Lewis, loc. cit.

<sup>11</sup>"Without Special Architectural Design, New City Hall is One of Most Unique Buildings in County", University City Journal, October 31, 1930, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>Sidney Morse, op. cit., passim.

<sup>14</sup>History of St. Louis County, Missouri, Clayton, Missouri: Watchman Advocate, 1920, p. 143.

<sup>15</sup> Staff of U.S. Veterans' Bureau: District No. 9 (Missouri, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas), University City, Missouri: District No. 9 of the Veterans' Bureau, an undated personnel directory.

<sup>16</sup> Jim Longo, Tom Franey, Charles Scott Payne, eds. A University City Album: Remembrances and Reflections of Seventy-Five Years, St. Louis: The Citizen's Committee for the Seventy-Fifth Anniversary, 1981.

<sup>17</sup> City of University City, Historic Preservation, 1973.

D. Likely Sources Not Yet Investigated

There are many boxes of uncatalogued materials in the possession of the Missouri Historical Society, which may contain references to University City. The St. Louis Public Library has a microfilm of all of the issues of Women's Magazine. The heirs of E.G. Lewis have some of his personal records and effects. The heirs of Walter Heimbuecher, former city engineer, have boxes of his pictures and records. There is a rumor that a relative of Eugene Taylor, a turn of the century photographer whose name appears on some of the early prints of University City, still has some of his original glass negatives.

E. Supplemental Material: see the booklet entitled, "Historic Preservation."<sup>17</sup>

Photographic data attached.

Prepared by:

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